

## BOY.

acteristic,—she hated any sort of trouble. She only washed herself under protest, as a sort of concession to the civilisation of the day. She had been gifted with an abundance of beautiful hair. of a somewhat coarse texture, yet rich in colour and naturally curly,—it was “a nuisance,” she averred,—and as soon as she married she cut it short, “to save the bother of doing it in the morning,” as she herself stated. Until she had secured a husband, she had complied sufficiently with the rules of society to keep herself tidily dressed; but both before and after her boy was born she easily relapsed into the slovenly condition which she considered “comfort,” and which was her habitual nature. Truth to tell, she had no incentive or ambition to appear at her best. She had not been married to Captain the Honourable D’Arcy-Muir one week before she discovered his partiality for strong drink, and being far too lymphatic to urge resistance, she sank into a state of passive resignation to circumstances. What was the good of a pretty toilette”?—her husband never noticed how she dressed; whether she wore satin or sackcloth was a matter of equal indifference to him; so, finding that a short skirt and loose-fitting blouse formed a comfortable sort of “get-about” costume she adopted it, and stuck to it morning, noon, and night. Always inclined to *embonpoint*, she managed to get positively stout in a very short time; and chancing to read in a journal an article on “hygiene” which eloquently proved that corsets

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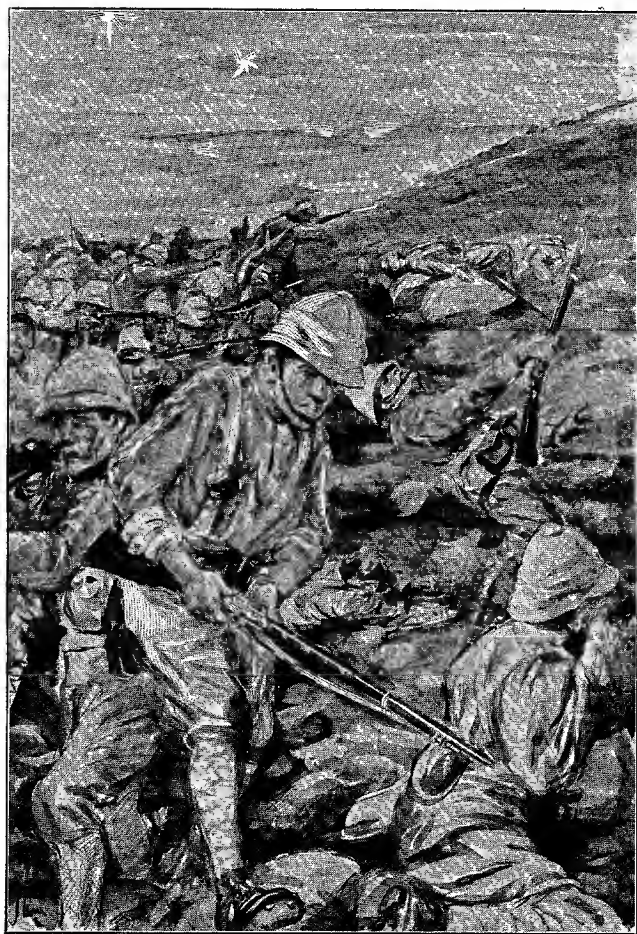
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*Boston Home Journal*



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TO MY DEAREST  
FRIEND IN THE WORLD

**BERTHA VYVER**

WHO HAS KNOWN ALL MY  
LIFE FROM CHILDHOOD  
AND HAS BEEN THE  
WITNESS OF MY WORK  
FROM THE BEGINNING  
THIS SIMPLE STORY  
IS GRATEFULLY AND  
LOVINGLY DEDICATED

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# BOY

## *A SKETCH*

BY  
MARIE CORELLI  
AUTHOR OF "THE SORROWS OF SATAN,"  
"BARABBAS," ETC.

*THIRD EDITION*



PHILADELPHIA  
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# BOY: A SKETCH



## CHAPTER I.

It is said by many people who are supposed to "know things" that our life is frequently, if not always, influenced by the first impressions we ourselves receive of its value or worthlessness. Some folks, assuming to be wiser even than the wisest, go so far as to affirm that if you, while still an infant in long clothes, happen to take a disgust to the manner and customs of your parents, you will inevitably be disgusted at most events and persons throughout the remainder of your earthly pilgrimage. If any truth exists in such a statement, then "Boy" had excellent cause to be profoundly disappointed in his prospects at a very early outset of his career. He sat in what is sometimes called a "feeding-chair," wedged in by a bar which guarded him from falling forward or tumbling out upon the floor, and the said bar was provided with an ingenious piece of wood, which was partially hollowed out in such wise as to keep him firm by his fat waist, as well as to provide a resting place for the plateful of bread-and-milk which he was enjoying as much as circumstances would permit him to enjoy anything. Every now and then he beat the plate solemnly with his spoon, as

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though improvising a barbaric melody on a new sort of tom-tom, and, lifting a pair of large, angelic blue eyes upward, till their limpid light seemed to meet and mix with the gold-glint of his tangled curls, he murmured, pathetically,—

“Oh, Poo Sing! Does 'oo feels ill? Does 'oo feels bad? Oh, Poo Sing!”

Now “Poo Sing” was not a Japanese toy, or a doll, or a bird, or any innocent object of a kind to attract a three-year-old child's fancy; “Poo Sing” was nothing but a Man, and a disreputable creature even at that. “Poo Sing” was Boy's father, and “Poo Sing” was for the moment—to put it quite mildly—blind drunk. “Poo Sing” had taken his coat and waistcoat off, and had pulled out the ends of his shirt in a graceful white festoon all round the waistband of his trousers. “Poo Sing” had also apparently done some hard combing to his hair, for the bulk of it stood somewhat up on end, and a few grizzled and wiry locks strayed in disorderly fashion across his inflamed nose and puffy eyelids, this effect emphasising the already half-foolish, half-infuriated expression of his face. “Poo Sing” staggered to and fro, his heavy body scarcely seeming to belong to his uncertain legs, and between sundry attacks of hiccough he trolled out scraps of song, now high, now low, sometimes in a quavering falsetto, sometimes in a threatening bass; while Boy listened to him wonderingly, and regarded his divers antics over the bar of the “feeding-chair” with serious compassion, the dul-



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cet murmur of "Does 'oo feels bad, Poo Sing!" recurring at intervals between mouthfuls of bread-and-milk and the rhythmic beat of the spoon. They were a strangely assorted couple,—Boy and "Poo Sing,"—albeit they were father and son. Boy, with his fair, round visage and bright halo of hair, looked more like a child-angel than a mortal, and "Poo Sing," in his then condition, resembled no known beast upon earth, since no beast ever gets voluntarily drunk save Man. Yet it must not for a moment be imagined that "Poo Sing" was not a gentleman. He *was* a gentleman,—most distinctly, most emphatically. He would have told you so himself, had you presumed to doubt it, with any amount of oaths to emphasise the fact. He would have spluttered at you somewhat in the following terms,—

"My father was a gentleman,—and my grandfather was a gentleman,—and my great grandfather was a gentleman,—and, d—n you, sir, our people were all gentlemen, every sanguinary man-jack of them, back to the twelfth century! No tommy-rot with me! None of your mean, skulking, money-grubbing Yankee millionaires in *our* lot! Why, you d—d rascal! Call me a gentleman!—I should pretty much think so! I am a D'Arcy-Muir,—and I have the blood of kings in my veins,—d—n you!"

Gentleman! I should think he *was* a gentleman! His language proved it! And his language was the first lesson in English that Boy received,

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though he was not aware of its full significance. So that when, two or three years later on, Boy cried out "D—n rascal papa!" quite suddenly and vociferously, he had no consciousness of saying anything that was not the height of filial tenderness and politeness. To be a D'Arcy-Muir meant to be the descendant of a long line of knights and noblemen who had once upon a time possessed huge castles with deep dungeons, where serfs and close kindred could be conveniently imprisoned and murdered at leisure without distinction as to character or quality;—knights and noblemen who some generations onward were transformed into "six-bottle men" who thought it seemly to roll under their dining-tables dead drunk every evening, and who, having merged themselves and their "blue blood" into this present nineteenth-century Captain the Honourable James D'Arcy-Muir, the father of Boy, were, we must suppose, in their condition of departed spirits, perfectly satisfied that they had bestowed a blessing upon the world by the careful production of such a "gentleman" and Christian.

Captain the Honourable, mindful of his race and breeding, took care to marry a lady whose ancestry was only just in a slight degree lower than his own. She could not trace her lineage back to the twelfth century, still, she came of what is sometimes called a good old stock, and she was handsome enough as a girl, though always large, lazy, and unintelligent. Indolence was her chief char-